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# Looking Backward

Ellis Mount

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## LOOKING BACKWARD

### Ellis Mount

In recent years there have been criticisms of American industry as not being as skilled as might be desired in capitalizing on the findings of scientists in the nation's laboratories so that new applications could be readily developed. Too much time, the critics have said, is required between the discovery of new findings by scientists and their integration in new products in development departments. It is interesting to note that this is not a new situation. An article in the Fall-Winter 1965 issue of *Sci-Tech News*, written by Emmanuel G. Mesthene of Harvard University, is partially devoted to this topic.<sup>1</sup> His main theme was the need to improve on information transfer of sci-tech materials, meaning the process of transmitting data to those who need it; his emphasis was on the sci-tech world. He presented a six-point program to expedite this process:

1. Induce a few eminent specialists to devote a year to studying the problem.
2. Give higher status to those who review current literature in search of important findings. Annual cash prizes could be awarded by a panel of scientists to the best publication brought to light.
3. Establish more information centers that would be very specialized in their scope, including one dealing only with information transfer.
4. Create a mixed team including both executives and information professionals to devote one or two years to exploit some particular discipline in order to benefit a typical sector of industry.

5. Establish a training program "to breed the new kind of information specialists needed to effect this translation."
6. Continue to support research into "various aspects of information transfer."

It is apparent that we have made some progress in the past 25 years on these topics, but we still have a long way to go to feel that information transfer is as effective and efficient as one might hope for.

1. Mesthene, Emmanuel G. On transferring knowledge for uses. *Sci-Tech News*. 19(3); 100-103; 1965 Fall-Winter.

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